

Take Care of Your Physical and Mental Health

Healthcare professionals recommend at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise each day. If you don't have time for an exercise class, make exercise part of your daily routine:

- Exercise while watching TV – use hand weights or a stair stepper
- Make a habit of taking your wheelchair-bound elder for a walk around the neighborhood – it's good for both of you!
- Park the car farther away from your destination.
- Buy a fitness tape – aerobics, pilates, tai chi, yoga - and work out at home.
- Take the stairs, instead of the elevator or escalator.
- Take fitness breaks - walking or doing desk exercises - instead of coffee breaks.
- Plant a garden – you can weed; your elder can water.
- Turn off the self-propel option on your lawn mower or vacuum cleaner.
- Play the music you love and dance, dance, dance.
- Keep a pair of running shoes handy in your car and office.
- Make a Saturday morning walk a group, or family, habit.
- When shopping, walk up and down each aisle.
- Most malls and large department stores loan wheelchairs to shoppers at no charge. Call ahead to reserve one, then spend some time 'window shopping' with your elder.

For stress relief try the following:

- Practice relaxation techniques – breathing exercises, meditation, aromatherapy
- Your needs and those of the person you care for are very different. It is important that you communicate and understand each other.
- Make a schedule - practicing good time management lowers stress. You need time for yourself. Put that high on your list.
- Spend time talking with a friend each week. Have coffee together or meet after church. If you are unable to leave the house, invite a friend to come by and visit with you.
- Keep a gratitude journal. Each day write down three things for which you are grateful. You'll be making an inventory of all that you have, instead of what you don't have.
- Smile when you answer the phone, and at random times throughout the day. Each time a person smiles, the pleasure receptors in the brain release endorphins, which promote a sensation of well-being and contentment.

Smiling is contagious ~ pass it along!